Finding Aid for the Marta Becket Papers, ca. 1969-

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Descriptive Summary
Title: Marta Becket Papers
Date (inclusive): ca. 1969-
Collection number: 1399
Creator: Becket, Marta.
Extent: 5 boxes (2.5 linear ft.) 1 oversize box.
Abstract: The collection consists of materials related to the development and growth of the Amargosa Opera House as a performance venue by Marta Becket and Tom Williams and the productions created by Marta Becket since the theatre's opening in 1968.
Repository: University of California, Los Angeles. Library Special Collections.
Los Angeles, California 90095-1575
Physical location: Stored off-site at SRLF. Advance notice is required for access to the collection. Please contact the UCLA Library Special Collections Reference Desk for paging information.
Restrictions on Access
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], Marta Becket papers (Collection 1399). UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.
UCLA Catalog Record ID
UCLA Catalog Record ID: 5262776
Biography
Marta Becket was born in New York City in 1924 and raised there until she was six. She moved with her mother to Harrisburg, Penn. and later to Philadelphia where she studied piano and art. At the age of 12, after her parents divorce, she returned with her mother to New York where she studied interpretive dance with Ingaborg Tarrup and ballet with Mme. Dorothy Duval. During the Depression, she dropped out of high school to begin a full-time dance career. She danced in nightclubs, army and navy hospitals and theater restaurants, became a member of the corps de ballet at Radio City Music Hall and then performed in the 1946 revival of Showboat. Becket also modeled for fashion magazines and did freelance art work. She then won a role in A Tree Grows in Brooklyn and performed at the Alvin Theatre during its year long run which ended in 1951. Her next musical role was in Wonderful Town with Rosalind Russell which opened at the Wintergarden Theatre in 1953 for another year long run. Becket continued with her art work and illustrated Stories of the Great Ballets, by George Balanchine (Doubleday & Co., 1954) and Star Performance, by Walter Terry (Doubleday & Co., 1954). She developed a repertoire for solo concerts and began touring in 1955. During this time she met Tom Williams who became her husband and manager. While traveling through Death Valley in 1967, Becket and Williams came across the Amargosa Hotel, which they had first seen in 1964. On this visit, Marta Becket discovered Corkhill Hall, an abandoned community center and theatre built by the Pacific Borax Company. She saw the theater as a place to fulfill her creativity and love of performing. In August 1967, Becket and Williams took over Corkhill Hall which Becket renamed the Amargosa Opera House. While they renovated the theatre and hotel together, Becket created pantomime dance productions which first opened to the public in February 1968. She then painted the walls and ceiling of the theatre with elaborate murals of costumed spectators for her performances and added more murals to the Amargosa Hotel. Through the efforts of Becket and Williams, the Amargosa Opera House and Hotel were named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1981. Marta Becket continues to create new productions and perform for audiences in Death Valley Junction.
Scope and Content
The collection consists of materials related to the development and growth of the Amargosa Opera House as a performance venue by Marta Becket and Tom Williams and the productions created by Marta Becket since the theatre's opening in 1968.
Organization and Arrangement
Arranged in the following series:
1. Amargosa Opera House publications and printed items
2. A documentary directed by Marta Becket
3. Videotapes of performances by Marta Becket
4. Scrapbooks of articles regarding the Amargosa Opera House compiled by Marta Becket
5. Published articles about Marta Becket.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Subjects
Becket, Marta-- Archives.
Women theatrical producers and directors--California--Archives.
Amargosa Opera House (Death Valley Junction, Calif.)

Amargosa Opera House

Box 2, Folder 1  
Amargosa Opera House Guild donation card. no date.
Physical Description: 1 item.

Box 2, Folder 2  
The Future of Death Valley Junction and the Amargosa Opera House are in peril" ... [re hauling of nuclear waste on Highway 127]. 2003?
Physical Description: 1 item.

Box 2, Folder 3  
Program for "The Dollmaker", 30th anniversary production. 1998?
Physical Description: 4 copies.

Box 2, Folder 4  
Program for "On With the Show". 1993.
Physical Description: 4 copies.

Box 2, Folder 5  
Physical Description: 4 copies.

Box 2, Folder 6  
Physical Description: 4 copies.

Box 2, Folder 7  
Amargosa Opera House brochure. no date.
Physical Description: 4 copies.

Box 2, Folder 8  
Physical Description: 1 item.

Box 2, Folder 9  
Amargosa Opera House, Inc. [Newsletter]. 2003 Spring.
Physical Description: 4 copies.

Box 2, Folder 10  
Marta Becket. A Theatrical Portrait: The Artist, The Performer, And Her Amargosa Opera House . no date [ca. 2002?]
Physical Description: 2 copies.

Box 2, Folder 11  
Physical Description: 1 item.
Scope and Content Note
Bound program, 34 unnumbered pages.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box and Folder</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
    Physical Description: 1 item and 2 photographs.  
    **Scope and Content Note**  
    Bound program with a photograph of Marta Becket in the Amargosa Opera House and another photograph of Marta Becket and Wilget in a scene from "The Farewell Letter" laid in. 23 unnumbered pages. |
| Box 2, Folder 13 | **Marta Becket's Amargosa Opera House Year 2000 Millennium Calendar. 2000.**  
    Physical Description: 1 item.  
    **Scope and Content Note**  
    Unnumbered copy. Illustrated with photos of the Amargosa Opera House and Hotel murals by Marta Becket and photos of performances by Marta Becket. |
| Box 4, Folder 3 | **Newsletters, flyers and postcards featuring the Amargosa Opera House 1993-2003, undated.**  
    Physical Description: 19 items (includes 5 postcards).  
    **Scope and Content Note**  
| Box 6, Folder 6 | **Program for Marta Becket in "Dance - Mime." 1987-1988.**  
    Physical Description: 1 item. |
| Box 6, Folder 7 | **Marta Becket. A Theatrical Portrait: Before the Amargosa Opera house. no date.**  
    Physical Description: 1 item. |
| Box 6, Folder 8 | **Program for Marta Becket in "Dance - Mime." 1989-1990.**  
    Physical Description: 1 item. |
| Box 6, Folder 9 | **Program for Marta Becket in "Dance - Mime," 25th Anniversary. 1968-1993.**  
    Physical Description: 1 item. |
| Box 1, Folder 10 | **Documentary by Marta Becket**  
    **Touring Death Valley Junction with Judy Tubb, alias Trudy Hubb from "On With the Show." 1998.**  
    Physical Description: 1 VHS cassette.  
    **Scope and Content Note**  
    • Written and directed by Marta Becket.  
    • Camera & editing: Ramon Caballero.  
    • Running time: 40 minutes.  
    Includes vintage photographs donated by U.S. Borax, Brian Brown, Lasley S. Biven, David Paulson with permission from The Frashers Collection and support of Inyo County of the Arts. |

**Marta Becket**

**Articles about**
Articles about

Box 2, Folder 14
"Playing All the Parts: The Exceptional Marta Becket" by Jan Wilkens, Dance Teacher Now. 1993 Nov / Dec.
Physical Description: 1 item.
Scope and Content Note
Pages 116-122, 124.

Box 5, Folder 1
Physical Description: 1 item.
Scope and Content Note
Page 30. Box 5 is an oversize flat box, 21" x 24".

Box 5, Folder 2
Physical Description: 1 item.
Scope and Content Note
The Arts, pages E1, E4. Box 5 is an oversize flat box, 21" x 24".

Autobiography

Box 6, Folder 1
Physical Description: typescript(photocopy).

Box 6, Folder 2
Physical Description: typescript(photocopy).

Box 6, Folder 3
Physical Description: typescript(photocopy).

Box 6, Folder 4
Physical Description: typescript(photocopy).

Box 6, Folder 5
Physical Description: typescript(photocopy).

Box 4, Folder 2
Lifetime Tribute to Marta Becket by the Death Valley Chamber of Commerce 2003 Nov 23.
Physical Description: 6 items.
Scope and Content Note
2 copies of the program and 4 commemorative cards with a photograph of Marta Becket.

Performances
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1, Folder 1</th>
<th>Comeback Vaudeville or ... Don't Call Us, We'll Call You. 1996.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Description: 1 VHS cassette.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Goldie's rehearsal hall during the declining years of vaudeville.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scenario: Marta Becket.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scenery &amp; costumes: Marta Becket.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Camera &amp; editing: Ramon Caballero.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Video box photos: Mary Scodwell.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Running time: 47 minutes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 2</td>
<td>Dollmaker (The). 2002?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Description: 1 VHS cassette.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehearsal video.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 3</td>
<td>Dollmaker (The). 2002?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Description: 1 VHS cassette.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance video.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 4</td>
<td>Goodtime Cabaret (The). 1996.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Description: 1 VHS cassette.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Starring Marta Becket, co-starring Tom Willett - &quot;Wilget&quot;.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scenario: Marta Becket.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Music: Strauss.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scenery &amp; costumes: Marta Becket.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Camera &amp; editing: Ramon Caballero.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Video box photos: Tony Scodwell.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Running time: 41 minutes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 5</td>
<td>Inheritance (The). 1980.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Description: 1 VHS cassette.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;1980 dance-drama that takes place at the turn of the century&quot; [description from Spring 2002 Newsletter], music by Claude Debussy.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cinematography: Clyde Parker.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Narrator: Tom Williams.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 1, Folder 6</td>
<td>On With The Show. 1993.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Description: 1 VHS cassette.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope and Content Note</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;A mini-musical commemorating 25 years of adventure at the historical Amargosa Opera House.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scenario, choreography, set designs &amp; costumes by Marta Becket.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Camera &amp; editing: Ramon Caballero.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Still photography: Tony Scodwell and Tom Williams.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Running time: 55 minutes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Box 1, Folder 7

**Performance Tonight. 1992.**

Physical Description: 1 VHS cassette.

Scope and Content Note

- Cinematography: Tom Williams.
- Film editor: Ramon Caballero.
- Still Photography: Tony Scodwell.
- Running time: 78 minutes.

Box 1, Folder 8

**Reflections of a Dancer: Marta Becket and Her World Famous Amargosa Opera House. 1989.**

Physical Description: 1 VHS cassette.

Scope and Content Note
From the film "Motel", produced and directed by Christian Blackwood.

- Running time: 30 minutes.

Box 1, Folder 9

**Second Mortgage (The). 1994.**

Physical Description: 1 VHS cassette.

Scope and Content Note

- Camera & editing: Ramon Caballero.
- Running time: approximately 60 minutes.

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**Realia**

Box 4, Folder 1

**White satin toe shoes. 2003.**

Physical Description: 1 pair.

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**Scrapbooks**

Box 2, Folder 15

**[Clippings re Marta Becket and the Amargosa Opera House House]. 1969, 1972.**

Physical Description: 1 scrapbook.

Scope and Content Note
Includes printed invitation to celebrate completion of the murals on the Amargosa Opera House, 9 Aug 1972 and articles from

- The Nevadan (18 May 1969)
- Los Angeles Times (21 Dec 1969)
- The Nevadan (7 Dec 1969)
- KLAM-ITY KOURIER (25 Feb 1970)
- Pacific Stars and Stripes (22 Dec 1969)
- National Geographic (1969?)
- and an unattributed article (no date).
Box 2, Folder 16


Physical Description: 1 scrapbook.
Scope and Content Note
Includes articles from
- Owens Valley Progress-Citizen (22 Feb 1973)
- Nevadan (1 Apr 1973)
- San Diego Historical Newsletter (Jan 1973)
- Salt Lake Tribune (31 Dec 1972)
- unidentified clippings (Dec 1972) & photos of window display and Japanese tour group
- Sunday People [photocopy] (12 Nov 1972?)
- New York Sunday Times (4 Mar 1973)
- unidentified clipping (no date)
- invitation to demonstration ballet class (8 Jun 1969)
- program for 2nd annual recital by Dance Students of Marta Becket (8 Jun 1970)
- article from Chip Chat (Apr 1973).

Box 3, Folder 1


Physical Description: 1 scrapbook.
Scope and Content Note
Includes articles from
- Life Magazine (17 Apr 1970)
- Las Vegas Sun (26 Apr 1970)
- Death Valley National Monument Weekly Heat Wave (19 May 1970) and 2 photos of Marta Becket with cast of "Hair"
- column by Virginia Kay (no date)
- National Park Courier (1 Feb 1970)
- 2 photos of Marta with cast of "Hair" Denver Post (10 Feb 1971)
- Wall Street Journal (3 Feb 1971)
- Los Angeles Times (25 Feb 1971)
- Las Vegas Review-Journal (11 Apr 1971)
- News Bulletin [Kern County?] (7 Mar 1971)
- and Tribal Spokesman (18 May 1971).
Box 3, Folder 2


Physical Description: 1 scrapbook.
Scope and Content Note
Includes articles from the
• Sun-Telegram (29 Apr 1973)
• Tonopah newspaper (20 Apr 1973)
• Desert Breeze (no date ca. 1973)
• Big Bear Valley Historical Society Certificate (3 Mar 1973)
• Daily California El Cajon (10 Aug 1973)
• Las Vegas newspaper (13 Jul 1974)
• Valley Times (no date)
• First Westerner Club Newsletter (Oct 1974)
• Los Angeles Times (3 Nov 1974)
• Motorland (Jan / Feb 1975)
• Pioneer (24 Nov 1974)
• A-1 Tours [San Diego] advertisement
• Nevadan (12 Oct 1975)
• Sacramento Union (3 Jan 1976).

Box 3, Folder 3


Physical Description: 1 scrapbook.
Scope and Content Note
Includes articles from
• an unidentified Danish magazine (no date)
• Pahrump Valley Times (10 Aug 1979)
• Desert (Jan 1979)
• Desert Trail (16 Aug 1979)
• "Desert town" by Jane Ann Morrison from an unidentified newspaper (no date)
• Valley Times (14 Oct 1979)
• "The Past for Sale" by Donald Kennedy from an unidentified magazine (Sep 1979)
• Daily News (7 Oct 1979)
• unidentified magazine article (no date)
• "Death Valley landmark to sell" by Jane Ann Morrison from an unidentified newspaper (no date)
• photocopy of letter from Stanley D. Troutner (19 Jul 1980).

Physical Description: 1 scrapbook.

Scope and Content Note
includes articles from

• the Los Angeles Times (20 Mar 1988)
• Historic Preservation (Mar / Apr 1988)
• articles from unidentified newspapers (no dates)
• Condé Nast Travel (Aug 1988)
• FMC (Aug 1988)
• Gateway Gazette (no date)
• "Ballerina Becket debuts new season" from an unidentified newspaper (no date)
• "Opera House blooms in Death Valley" from the Boston Globe (no date)
• Las Vegas Sun (22 Sep 1986)
• Boston Globe (27 Nov 1986)
• San Diego Union (18 Dec 1988)
• Gateway Gazette (16 Feb 1990)
• Coast to Coast Magazine (Apr 1989)
• Silver Kris (June 1989)
• American Way (15 Nov 1989)
• color photo of Marta Becket with German text (no date)
• unidentified magazine in French (no date)
• Dance Teacher Now (Nov / Dec 1993)
• Las Vegas Sun (7 Dec 1990)
• American West Airlines Magazine (Feb 1992)
• Las Vegas Review-Journal (9 Feb 1993)
• obituary for George Abbott from Time Magazine (13 Feb 1995).